4152 m 1

William Rathbone 1p

Will [I]

Philadelphia Society of Friends

AN EPISTLE

BRITISH MUSEUM

FROM OUR

Yearly-Meeting,

Held at PHILADELPHIA, for PENNSYLVANIA and NEW-JERSEY, by Adjournments, from the 24th Day of the 9th Month, to the 1st of the 10th Month, inclusive, 1774;

To our FRIENDS and BRETHREN in these and the neighbouring Provinces.

BELOVED FRIENDS,

THE Lord, the Master of our assemblies, having been graciously pleased to favour us in this our solemn assembly with the renewings of his love, and united us in a fervent concern for the edification of each other "in the faith which overcometh the world," 1 John 5. 4. "without which it is impossible to please him:" Our minds are Heb. 11. 6. deeply impressed with sincere and earnest desires, that in this time of probation and affliction, every member of our religious society may seriously consider the foundation of our Christian profession, and by a conduct agreeable thereto, manifest the excellency of that Divine Principle of Light and Truth, which enlighteneth our understandings and influenceth our minds truly to know, and faithfully to perform every duty enjoined us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who declared "his kingdom was not of this world," and of John 18. 36. whom one of his apostles testified that "it became him for whom and "by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make "the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Heb. 2. 10.

We

We beſeech you therefore, frequently to commemorate the wonderful manifeſtation of Divine regard, in thus introducing the glorious diſpenſation of the Goſpel of Peace and Salvation, in a way and manner ſo contrary to the hope and expectation of the high profeſſors of that age, that they ſaid, " if the people believed on him, the Romans would
John 11.48. " come and take away their place and nation ;" but his deſpiſed diſciples faithfully attending to his precepts, were endued with power from on high, qualified to ſpread his doctrines to diſtant nations, and after patiently enduring many afflictions, triumphed over all through faith in his name.

And while thoſe who thus obtained the knowledge of God remained ſtedfaſt therein, " the multitude of them that believed were of one
Acts 4. 32. " heart and of one ſoul," but when the great and wiſe men of the earth were brought to the acknowledgment of the Truth, and their favour extended to the profeſſors of it, inſtead of the denial of ſelf, and love one of another, which were the firſt marks of diſcipleſhip, the love of the world prevailing, ſchiſms, contentions, diſcord, and a general declenſion and apoſtacy enſued, and tho' the name and profeſſion of chriſtianity was retained, the church remained many ages
Rev. 12.16. in the wilderneſs ; and it hath been manifeſt that as in theſe latter times ſhe hath been gradually coming forth from thence, the bleſſing of Divine Providence hath been granted to the miniſters of the reformation, through the ſteps they purſued while they adhered to, and lived under the peaceable ſpirit and doctrines of Chriſt ; but as they or their ſucceſſors departed therefrom, and ſought an eſtabliſhment by human wiſdom and ſtrength, " their zeal cooled, their faith decreaſed, and
Barcl. apol. 568. " their piety degenerated," and the progreſs of the reformation was obſtructed.

This appears to have been the ſtate of the church near the middle of the laſt century, when, by the renewed manifeſtation of Divine Favour, the Light of the Goſpel again broke forth in Great-Britain, and a diſpenſation thereof was committed to a few men of low ſtations in life, and unlearned in human literature ; who, being endued with heavenly wiſdom and fortitude, were thereby enabled to preach the doctrines of the Kingdom of Chriſt in the demonſtration of his Spirit and Power, to the convincing and converting many thouſands to the knowledge of the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel ; and thus our forefathers and predeceſſors were raiſed to be a people in a time of great commotions, conteſts and wars, began and carried on for the vindication of religious and civil liberty, in which many of them were zealouſly engaged, when they received the knowledge of the Truth ; but through the influences of the Love of Chriſt in their minds, they ceaſed from conferring with fleſh and blood, and became obedient to the heavenly viſion, in which they clearly ſaw that all wars and fightings proceed from the ſpirit of
Jam. 4. 4. this world, which is enmity with God, and that they muſt manifeſt themſelves to be the followers of the Prince of Peace, by meekneſs, humility, and patient ſufferings ; and tho' for a time they were evilly intreated and ſpoken againſt as evil doers, by the uprightneſs of their conduct

conduct and converſation " they put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh 1 Pet. 2. 15.
" men," and through the divers revolutions of the government, were with chriſtian boldneſs, enabled to remonſtrate againſt the oppreſſion of the Rulers, and to lay before them the injuſtice of the laws which were made and enforced againſt the innocent; for as they could freely appeal to their oppreſſors, that they were never concerned in any plots, inſurrections, or conſpiracies, they thereby added a convincing force to the reaſons they offered in ſupport of their rights and liberties; the truth of which was ſo evident, that even while perſecution and oppreſſion were permitted and exerciſed againſt them in England, thoſe of them who inclined to remove from thence and ſettle in New-Jerſey and Pennſylvania, were entruſted with as full enjoyment of religious and civil liberty, as the ſolemn ſanction of the charters granted by the King, could aſſure to them and their poſterity. " This was the Lord's Pſ. 118, 23.
" doing, and was marvellous in their eyes", and remains to be ſo in the eyes of all who duly conſider it: may the ſenſe thereof be frequently revived in our minds with thankfulneſs and reverence!

And as our forefathers were often led to commemorate theſe and the many inſtances of Divine Favour conferred on them, thro' the difficulties they encountered in ſettling in the wilderneſs, let us be like minded with them—and if after a long time of enjoying the fruits of their labours, and partaking of the bleſſings of peace and plenty, we ſhould be reſtrained or deprived of ſome of our rights and privileges, let us carefully guard againſt being drawn into the vindication of them, or ſeeking redreſs by any meaſures which are not conſiſtent with our religious profeſſion and principles, nor with the chriſtian patience manifeſted by our anceſtors in ſuch times of trial; and we fervently deſire all may impartially conſider whether we have manifeſted that firmneſs in our love to the cauſe of Truth, and univerſal righteouſneſs which is required of us, and that we may unite in holy reſolutions to ſeek the Lord in ſincerity, and to wait upon Him daily for wiſdom, to order our conduct hereafter in all things to his praiſe.

And, beloved Friends, we beſeech you in brotherly affection to remember, that as under Divine Providence we are indebted to the King and his royal anceſtors, for the continued favour of enjoying our religious liberties, we are under deep obligations to manifeſt our loyalty and fidelity, and that we ſhould diſcourage every attempt which may be made by any to excite diſaffection or diſreſpect to him, and paricularly to manifeſt our diſlike of all ſuch writings as are, or may be publiſhed of that tendency.

And as it hath ever been our practice ſince we were a people, frequently to adviſe all profeſſing with us to be careful not to defraud the King of his cuſtoms or duties, nor to be concerned in dealing in goods unlawfully imported; we find it neceſſary now moſt earneſtly to exhort that the ſame care may be continued with faithfulneſs and diligence, and that Friends keep clear of purchaſing any ſuch goods, either for ſale or private uſe; that ſo we may not be any way inſtrumental in countenancing

1/152 BB 11

tenancing or promoting the iniquity, falſe ſwearing, and violence, which are the common conſequences of an unlawful and clandeſtine trade. May we therefore wiſely determine rather to forbear the uſe of ſuch things, as we have juſt grounds to believe are imported in that manner, and by this and every other part of our conduct, give a public teſtimony of our ſincere deſire that we may ſubmit to the juſt adminiſtration of the laws, agreeable to our chriſtian principles, and that our ſubmiſſion to any meaſures impoſed by the violence of parties, is not with our conſent; for ſome we fear have not ſufficiently conſidered the imminent danger of allowing any temporal conſiderations to influence them to depart from the wholeſome regulations and limitations of the laws, under which we have enjoyed protection and peace.

And, dear Friends, by the aboundings of the Love of Chriſt, experienced at this time, we are led into deep ſympathy with ſuch who are now moſt immediately expoſed to ſufferings, and our minds are deeply bowed in an awful concern that our ancient peaceable teſtimony may be maintained and exalted, that all who have known the Truth, may ſtedfaſtly abide therein with our eye ſingle to our Holy Head, by a circumſpect conduct demonſtrating, that we are following Him under the influences of his "wiſdom, which is pure, peaceable, "gentle, and full of mercy and good fruits;" that thus we may happily experience "the fruit of righteouſneſs ſown in peace of them Jam. 3, 18. "who make peace."

Signed in and on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, by

JAMES PEMBERTON, *Clerk.*

20 JY 63